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ABSTRACT

This report on a study of family violence in the homes of serious juvenile offenders in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts contains a brief introduction and seven substantive sections. Sections 2, 3 and 4 review the literature with regard to the extent of family violence, the consequences of childhood victimization, and societal reaction to the problem. The research design and methodology are detailed in section 5, and findings are presented in sections 6 and 7. Findings indicate that: (1) one-half of the youths had been exposed to violence or serious neglect in the home; (2) the majority of abused or neglected youths had not been reported to the Department of Social Services for parental abuse or neglect nor had they received any counseling services prior to commitment as juvenile offenders; (3) nearly twice as many multiply-abused youths were reported to Social Services as those suffering only one type of abuse; (4) abused youths without abused siblings had attempted suicide at a much higher incidence than abused youth with abused siblings; (5) certain economic or ethnic groups were more likely to be involved in abusive situations than were others, with stepparents increasing the likelihood of multiple forms of abuse; (6) no apparent relationship between drug or alcohol involvement, psychological problems, attempted suicide, and exposure to family violence was found; and (7) demographic characteristics did not distinguish reported families from non-reported families. A section of conclusions discusses policy implications and offers specific recommendations for identification, response, and intervention. Appendices provide definitions of abuse and neglect categories and copies of the study instruments. A 56-item bibliography is included. (ABL)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DELINQUENT YOUTH AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

A study of abuse and neglect in the homes of
serious juvenile offenders

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May, 1985

Philip W. Johnston, Secretary
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I. Background

In the fall of 1983, Commissioner Edward M. Murphy requested that the Research Unit of the Department of Youth Services (DYS) undertake an empirical examination of the problem of family violence among DYS clients. The Research Unit responded by designing a study to measure the extent of family violence, factors relating to the abuse of youths, behavioral outcomes associated with child abuse and neglect, and factors relating to the official reporting and intervention into abusing families.

II. Research Design and Data Collection Methods

In studying the problem of family violence and official intervention by the state, we employed two distinct research designs. The first analyzed DYS case histories for a sample of 165 serious delinquents. The second analyzed DYS and Department of Social Services (DSS) records for a sub-sample of 66 youths whom we identified as victims of family abuse. In addition, we conducted a review of the available research literature on the extent and consequences of family brutality as well as societal reaction to this problem.

III. Summary of Findings

(1) Extent of Family Violence

The extent of family violence experienced by our sample of DYS clients is alarming. Fully one-half of the youths studied were exposed to violence or serious neglect in the home: forty percent were directly abused and ten percent more were indirect witnesses to the abuse of a sibling or mother. Girls in our sample had nearly twice the probability as boys of experiencing abuse. For both boys and girls, the most common form of abuse was physical abuse, followed by neglect for boys and sexual assault for girls.

(2) Extent of Official Reporting

The majority of abused or neglected youths in our sample were not reported to the Department of Social Services (DSS) for parental abuse or neglect, nor did they receive any individual or family counseling services prior to their commitment to DYS. Contrary to what we expected, we found virtually no differences in reporting rates for sexual abuse as compared with physical abuse and neglect.

(3) Characteristics of Abusive Environment and Official Reporting

We found a positive and statistically significant relationship between the form of victimization of DYS clients and the likelihood that they were reported to DSS. Nearly twice as many multiply-abused youths were reported as were youths who suffered only one type of abuse. Neither the number of victims nor the number of abusers in a household effected the likelihood of official reporting.

(4) Isolated Victims of Abuse

An important finding concerning isolated abuse victims -- that is, those abused youths without abused siblings -- was that they attempted suicide at a much higher incidence than abused youths with abused siblings. Abused youths without an abused sibling were nearly six times more likely to have attempted suicide than were youths with an abused sibling.

(5) Characteristics of Abusing Parents

Our data provide no evidence that certain economic or ethnic groups are most likely to be involved in abusive situations in the home. While we found that natural parents were overwhelmingly the most likely abusers, we also found that when stepparents were involved, the likelihood of multiple forms of abuse rose sharply.

(6) Consequences of Abuse

Our examination of the relationship between abuse and delinquent behavior produced mixed results. When we compared court records of abused and non-abused youths, we found only minor differences in their delinquency involvement as a whole, but recent involvement in violent offenses was more common among abused youths. Other findings suggest that in some cases family influence may substitute for peer group influence on delinquent behavior. Youths who were themselves abused by a family member and who were also witnesses to family violence were very likely to commit their offenses alone, without peer accomplices. Youths who were neither abused nor witnesses to family violence, on the other hand, were more likely to commit their offense in the company of delinquent peers. Contrary to our initial hypotheses, we found no apparent relationship between serious drug involvement, alcohol involvement, psychological problems, or attempted suicide and exposure to family violence.

(7) Characteristics of Abusive Families and Official Reporting

Demographic characteristics failed, at a statistically significant level, to distinguish families who were officially reported from those who were not. We found no substantial differences in referral rates when we compared sex or familial role of the abuser.

IV. Summary of Policy Implications

Due to the extent and potentially severe consequences of abuse experienced by our clients, a plan of action is needed to address questions of appropriate client treatment and family intervention. For most children, DYS involvement marks the first official intervention into the abusive family situation. It is therefore particularly important that DYS' philosophy of community-based treatment take into account the prevalence and influence of violent family environments.

A finding which may have policy implications both within and outside of DYS is that abused clients who were the only youthful victims in their families were by far the most likely group to attempt suicide. Within DYS, program staff and caseworkers should be alert to this type of youth, particularly if he or she exhibits any evidence of suicidal tendencies. Outside of DYS, agencies such as DSS that provide care and custody to children of violent families should consider the possible negative consequences of splitting up siblings who have been abused. Our findings concerning attempted suicide suggest that abused siblings provide needed support to one another and mitigate the sense of isolation and victimization that accompanies parental violence. It may be advisable to place abused siblings together in order to minimize the psychological damage caused from childhood abuse. Similarly, it may be advisable to provide isolated youthful victims of family violence with additional services to address issues of negative self-concept and self-destructive behavior.

We recommend that DYS develop standardized methods for caseworkers to identify abused and neglected youths and elicit any information needed to plan client treatment and family intervention. On a broader scale, the National Council on Child Abuse and Neglect recommended that agency administrators combine resources to design treatment and intervention policy. The Council determined that a multi-disciplinary model implemented

jointly by all agencies involved in the care and treatment of children and adolescents would best address the complexities of the problem of family violence.

Our findings have certain implications for targeting agency intervention. According to our data, female clients have a substantially higher probability of experiencing abuse. This suggests that top priority be given to the development of intervention strategies for girls. Our data also suggest that family intervention should involve both natural parents and stepparents. We found that natural parents are more likely to abuse their children, but stepparents are more likely to inflict multiple types of abuse.

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PREFACE

In the fall of 1983, Commissioner Edward M. Murphy requested that the Research Unit of the Department of Youth Services (DYS) undertake an empirical study of the problem of family violence among DYS clients. The Research Unit responded by designing a study to measure the extent of family violence, factors relating to the abuse of youths, behavioral outcomes associated with child abuse and neglect, and factors relating to the official reporting and intervention into abusing families. In addition to our findings we are presenting implications and recommendations for policy which are intended as preliminary. We anticipate that our findings and recommendations will be used as guidelines for further comprehensive policy analysis.

This report represents the first of two reports which examine the problem of family violence. This initial phase examines the extent of violence in the homes of serious delinquents and patterns of official reporting. A second phase will focus on the relationship between family violence and delinquency. The second report will concentrate in more detail on delinquent career patterns of abused and non-abused youth, and will compare abuse records of DYS' most serious offenders with its least serious offenders. Both phases were designed under joint sponsorship with the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS).

This study could not have been completed without the tireless coding efforts of our research staff. Acknowledgements go to Kimberly Jennings, Research Assistant, Mark Lipof, Lee Kimball and Suzanne Tanner, research interns, for their assistance on this project. We also appreciate the data collection and data entry efforts of Sheila Ahern and Donald Green and we thank Bernadette Davis for her assistance in preparing this manuscript. Special thanks go to Julia Herskowitz, Director of Research, Evaluation and Planning at DSS for her advice and guidance on the research design.

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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project on Department of Youth Services clients' exposure to family violence is two-fold. First, as an agency mandated to provide treatment and services to its client population, it is important that we understand as much as possible about clients' backgrounds and needs. Family violence has been shown to have profound and far-reaching effects on youths, and as a result, this area was targeted for systematic and in-depth analysis. What is the extent to which our clients have experienced violence and neglect in the home? Who in the family is responsible for committing acts of violence against other family members? What are the consequences of being victimized by a family member? What proportion of abuse or neglect cases are officially reported, and what circumstances make official reporting more likely? And, most importantly, what can our findings contribute to policy which seeks to control the problem of family violence?

The second purpose of this project is to examine factors associated with the official reporting of abuse. As the situation now stands, does DYS have the main responsibility for addressing the effects of violence on our clients, or has the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS) intervened in the majority of cases? Which cases are the most likely to receive attention from DSS? Finally, how can our findings help both agencies in improving client services?

This report is divided into seven remaining sections. Sections Two, Three and Four review the research literature with regard to the extent of family violence, the harmful consequences of childhood victimization, and societal reaction to the growing awareness of the problem. Section Five explains our research design, methods of data collection, characteristics of our sample, and shortcomings of this research. Sections Six and Seven present the findings of this project: Section Six examines

the extent, distribution and consequences of family violence for youths in our sample, and Section Seven discusses patterns of official reporting. The report's final component presents our conclusions and policy recommendations.

SECTION TWO: EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

A. Child Abuse and Neglect

Nationwide, child abuse, neglect and other forms of violence within the family are generally believed to be social problems of dramatic proportions, although estimates of the number of abused children show considerable variability. Only within the last two decades has the standard of treatment of children reached a point where maltreatment can be meaningfully identified (Pfohl, 1977). During 1979 and 1980, the United States National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN) sampled state agencies, schools and other community institutions in order to estimate the "true" incidence of child abuse and neglect, both reported and unreported. Their estimated nationwide total was 652,000 children or 10.5 per 1,000 (NCCAN, 1981).

Other research has produced far higher estimates. Self-reported questionnaire data show that each year, 14 out of every 100 children in the United States aged 3 through 17, or 6.5 million children, experience a serious assault by a parent (Strauss et al., 1980). This figure is 26 times greater than the NCCAN estimate, probably because the NCCAN measured abuse that respondents were aware of -- that is "visible" as opposed to "hidden" abuse. Furthermore, Strauss et al. argue that the true incidence of childhood abuse and neglect is probably double that figure, roughly 28 out of every 100 children.

Due to the hidden nature of child abuse, the exact numbers of children and adolescents subjected to parental violence will never be known. However, although much of the research on the incidence of abuse necessarily involves a degree of guesswork, three independent studies have arrived at roughly the same conclusion: that 22 to 25 percent of United States families are "at risk" of committing abuse for reasons including child-rearing ignorance, unrealistic expectations concerning children, propen-

sity toward violence, psychopathology, and presence of a special child (Garbarino and Gilliam, 1980; Gil, 1970; Gray et al., 1976).

In Massachusetts, official reports of childhood abuse and neglect have been steadily increasing over the past decade. Massachusetts Department of Social Services' figures for fiscal year 1983 revealed nearly 20,000 reported cases of abuse or neglect statewide. Of course there are inherent problems of under-reporting which make reliance on official data problematic (Fontana, 1977; Giovanni, 1982). Since official data is a product of official reporting, it is generally agreed not only that the problem is seriously under-estimated but that trend analysis based on official reports is grossly misleading. For example, between 1976 and 1978 the number or reports of child abuse or neglect increased by 485 nationwide, and by a staggering 98% in Massachusetts. As reporting systems improve and public awareness increases, we should expect an increase in official reports of abuse, although the actual incidence may in fact be decreasing, as at least one researcher believes (Strauss, 1981).

B. Sexual Abuse

To date, the topic of child sexual abuse has been grossly underresearched (Tierney, 1983), in part because of the methodological difficulties inherent in such research (Gelles, 1979). An early study conducted in 1955 estimated the incidence of incest at 1.9 per million people in the population per year (Weinberg, 1955). Research by the American Humane Association (DeFrancis, 1969) makes a higher projection -- 40 cases per million. An estimate of child sexual abuse by the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN, 1978) puts the figure between 60,000 and 100,000 cases per year. Still another estimate based on reported incidents in four United States locales is 336,000 cases per year (Sarafino, 1979). In yet another study, one-fifth of college women surveyed reported sexual victimization during childhood; of these, one-half indicated family members

were the perpetrators (Finkelhor, 1979). A recent study of the prevalence of child sex abuse in Boston found that nine percent of parents surveyed reported that their own children had been victims of abuse or attempted abuse (Finkelhor, 1982).

C. Spouse Abuse

Determining the extent of spouse abuse is extremely difficult for two reasons: underreporting of assaults and the failure of police records to separate domestic assaults from all other types of assault. One researcher has estimated that severe assaults on married women by their spouses occur in roughly four percent of all marriages each year (Gelles, 1979). Others estimate that an episode of domestic violence occurs in 50 to 60 percent of all couples at some point in their relationship (Davidson, 1978; Langley and Levi, 1977). One characteristic that is known is that once violence begins within a family, it tends to become more frequent and more serious as time passes (Langley and Levi, 1977). Furthermore, research suggests that the more violent husbands are toward their wives, the more violent wives are toward their children (Strauss, 1983), and that men who abuse their wives are much more likely to abuse their children and vice-versa (Strauss, 1980).

SECTION THREE: CONSEQUENCES OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

A recent argument has been made that there are two key processes of damage relevant to understanding the consequences of child abuse and neglect (Garbarino and Gilliam, 1980). The first involves children or youth imitating and identifying with their parents. This process involves both the accumulation of specific behaviors, habits and characteristics (modeling) and the development of a more general identity (identification). Ironically, behavioral evidence suggests that the higher the level of violence or the more intense the threat or loss of love, the stronger the child's motivation to emulate the parent may become (Burgess and Conger, 1978). The second process involves children or youth rationalizing family dynamics and the hurtful consequences of those dynamics. Abused children learn a negative self-concept and are likely to react with open hostility or withdrawal (Katz, 1967). Studies have demonstrated a link between childhood family violence and character disorders (Blumberg, 1979), aggressive fantasy and behavior (Reidy, 1977), and impaired ego functioning, impulse control and self-concept, acute anxiety and self-destructive behavior (Green, 1978). Other studies report that childhood exposure to violence results in a later tendency to abuse one's spouse (Fagan et al., 1983), to permit abuse by one's spouse (Silver et al., 1969), to use violence on siblings (Strauss, 1983), and to use physical violence on one's own children (Bennie and Sclare, 1969; Jenkins et al., 1977; Steinmetz, 1977).

Further research has examined the relationship between abuse and delinquency. In an ambitious study of abused and delinquent youths in New York State, records were tracked forward for a sample of 4,301 abused children and backward for a sample of 1,963 delinquents (Alfaro, 1978). The study found that 17.2 percent of the abused children were later reported to the juvenile court for delinquency and 22.8 percent of the delinquents had had prior contact with the child protective service system.

Furthermore, nearly half of the families reported for child abuse or neglect had at least one child who was later taken to court as ungovernable or delinquent. Children from abusive families were found to be five times as likely to be delinquent or ungovernable as those from the general population. The same study showed that delinquent abuse victims were far more likely to be violent offenders than nonabused delinquents. Abuse victims in one group of juvenile delinquents were twenty-four times as likely to have committed rape, and about twice as likely to have committed assault as the rest of the population (Ibid.).

A recent study conducted in Oregon examined the incidence of domestic violence among delinquent youths residing in a number of treatment programs across the state (Rhoades and Parker, 1981). Of the youths interviewed, 68 percent reported having experienced some type of domestic violence. Furthermore, juveniles who reported a greater degree of delinquency also reported that they were more frequently and seriously abused.

Other studies' findings tend to support the link between abuse and delinquency. Although the differences were not statistically significant, child abuse was noted more frequently in hospital records of "especially violent" boys compared to less violent boys (Lewis and Shanock, 1979). In addition, delinquent boys were found to have more punitive parents (Button, 1973; Welsh, 1976) as well as more vengeful and callous attitudes (Button, 1973; Strauss, 1983).

A number of studies relating family violence with delinquency have focussed on youths who commit murder. Murderous aggression has been linked with parental brutality (Corder et al., 1976; Eason and Steinhilber, 1961; Tanay, 1973), witnessing family violence and encouragement of violence in the home (Sendi and Blomgren, 1975). Studies which have examined the incidence of child abuse among serious adult offenders have concluded that the experience of childhood brutality and maltreatment is characteristic of a majority of such offenders (Bach-Y-Rita and Veno, 1974; Duncan et al., 1958; Steinmetz, 1977).

SECTION FOUR: SOCIETAL REACTION TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

Although the problem of child abuse is certainly not new, it did not surface as a major issue until the early 1960s after the classic presentation of the concept of the battered child by C. Henry Kempe and others in the Journal of the American Medical Association (Kempe et al., 1962). Within a few years after the Kempe article, every state had modified its laws in relation to this social problem. By 1967, all fifty states had passed mandatory reporting laws (Hochhauser, 1983) and most states have by now created new or modified old social service systems into child protectice service systems (NCCAN, 1978; Katz et al., 1977). The current philosophy underlying the social response to child abuse recommends that communities develop multi-disciplinary team responses (NCCAN, 1975). A federally funded study of the problem has recommended that all agencies that work with children and families unite in a coordinated and integrated community response network (NCCAN, 1975).

Since 1973, Massachusetts law has required, under Chapter 119, Section 51A, that certain professionals report suspected child abuse or neglect to Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS), and has encouraged others who may encounter abuse or neglect to report it (Mass. General Laws, Ch. 119, Section 51A). In cases involving physically or emotionally injured children, DSS is required to investigate, conduct a home visit, and obtain temporary custody immediately if necessary to protect the child from further abuse or neglect (Mass. General Laws, Ch. 119, Section 51B). In calendar year 1983, 12,518 children with substantiated conditions of abuse or neglect were reported to DSS. Roughly 1400 were children with substantiated conditions of sexual abuse (Mass. Department of Social Services, 1984).

In July, 1983, Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis signed the so-called "D.A. Reporting Bill" (Chapter 288, Acts and Resolves), which became effective in October, 1983. This law

mandates that certain extreme cases of child abuse meeting the conditions below be reported in writing to the District Attorney for investigation and possible prosecution. The conditions are as follows:

1. A child has died;
2. A child has been raped;
3. A child has suffered brain damage, loss or substantial impairment of a bodily function or organ or substantial disfigurement;
4. A child has been sexually exploited; or
5. A child has suffered serious bodily injury as a result of repetitive action by a family member. (Mass. Department of Social Services, undated.)

More than double the original projections -- 808 children -- were referred to the District Attorney's Office in the first year following passage of Chapter 288. It is still too early to know if the number of prosecutions of child abuse cases has increased, but it is generally agreed that the number of investigations of such cases has gone up considerably (Dukakis and Matava, 1985). During the first five months of implementation of Chapter 288, the overwhelming majority of cases referred to the District Attorney's Office were for sexual abuse (Dietz, 1984). Roughly seven out of every ten cases involved a girl, and perpetrators were primarily male family members living in the home (Mass. Department of Social Services, Nov. 1983, Dec. 1983, and Jan. 1984).

A report issued to the legislature examining the impact of Chapter 288 found that various new policies concerning child abuse and neglect are at least in part attributable to the attention generated by the reporting law. In anticipation of the effect of the new law, DSS' budget for fiscal year 1985 was expanded to $1.6 million for sexual abuse treatment programs. This funding has been allocated in a number of areas, including prevention and education geared to pre-school children, the for-

mation of multi-disciplinary treatment intervention teams, the purchase of interviewing aids such as anatomically correct dolls, long-term individual and family therapy, staff training for DSS workers, and training for staff from day care centers and other involved agencies (Dukakis and Matava, 1985).

SECTION FIVE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Massachusetts Department of Youth Services (DYS) case records for 165 court committed, seriously delinquent youths were examined for evidence and details of family violence, socio-economic characteristics of youths and their families, detailed information concerning youths' target offenses, youths' prior offense records, and the types of services, if any, DYS clients received for emotional or behavioral problems prior to their commitment to DYS. Specifically, we examined in-depth psychological and social history reports prepared for DYS Secure Classification Panel hearings regarding placement decisions. All youths presented to the Classification Panel between May 1, 1982 and April 30, 1983 were included in our sample.

Abuse was coded into one or more of the following categories: physical, sexual, neglect, and verbal, based on caseworkers' descriptions in the client folders (see Appendix A for definitions of abuse). Familial role of the abuser(s) (e.g., mother, stepfather) was also coded for each type of abuse. In addition, the information on abuse was collected not only when our clients were the victim, but for any sibling or mother of a youth in our sample who was victimized as well.

We then identified which of the youths in our sample had been reported to Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS), the agency to which all known cases of child abuse and neglect are referred for family intervention. We accessed DSS' central files, which included information on status of referral, e.g., abuse/neglect, and manually cross-matched the names of youths in our sample with DSS' card files. A total of 66 youths comprised our abused sub-sample.

Various patterns in the official reporting of abusive home situations were examined. Characteristics of abused youths and their families who were reported to DSS were compared with those

who were not reported to determine if certain factors make official intervention more likely. Other variables were analyzed to determine the association between DSS intervention and clients' subsequent behavior. Gamma, t-test and Chi-square statistics were used to explore the relationships between variables.

Description of Sample

A research sample of 165 DYS youths referred to the Secure Classification Panel was drawn from DYS' Central Office records. DYS is the state agency responsible for detaining and treating youths who are awaiting court disposition or who have been committed by the juvenile court. Youths are committed to DYS for a range of offenses and are handled differently by DYS depending on the seriousness of the offense. Violent or repetitive offenders are referred to DYS' Secure Classification Panel which reviews a detailed case history of each youth and determines if placement in a locked treatment facility is warranted.

Due to the richness of the case histories presented for Classification Panel review, we selected as our sample all youths referred to the Panel during a one year period. Strictly in terms of delinquent behavior, then, the youths in our sample represent the most serious youths committed to DYS. Fifty-nine percent of the sample youths committed offenses against the person, compared with one-fourth of all new commitments in 1983. An additional difference in our sample is that they tended to be older than new commitments and many had received prior services within DYS.

Aside from offense and age characteristics, other characteristics of our sample are similar to those of the 1983 commitment cohort. Chart 1 below compares demographic characteristics of all clients newly committed to DYS in 1983 and the youths in our sample.

CHART 1. 1983 NEW COMMITMENTS VS. RESEARCH SAMPLE

CLIENT CHARACTERISTICS [1]

		1983 COMMITMENTS		RESEARCH SAMPLE	
CHARACTERISTICS		N	%	N	%
	TOTAL:	799	100.0%	165	100.0%
SEX:	MALE	703	88.2%	143	87.2%
	FEMALE	94	11.8%	21	12.8%
RACE:	WHITE	554	69.7%	107	66.0%
	BLACK	137	17.2%	35	21.6%
	HISPANIC	92	11.6%	19	11.7%
	OTHER	12	1.5%	1	0.6%
REGION:	WESTERN	182	22.8%	28	17.1%
	CENTRAL	140	17.6%	24	14.6%
	NORTHEAST	154	19.3%	27	16.5%
	SOUTHEAST	168	21.0%	33	20.1%
	METRO	153	19.2%	52	31.7%
MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME:		$9,600		$7,416	
MEAN AGE AT COMMITMENT:		15 YEARS, 7 MONTHS		15 YEARS, 2 MONTHS	

Our research sample is similar to incoming 1983 commitments in terms of sex and race. However, the regional distribution of our sample is disproportionately weighted towards the Metropolitan Boston area, median family income for our sample is $2200 lower than for 1983 commitments, and average age at commitment is five months younger for our sample than for 1983 commitments.

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[1] Numbers may not add up to Total N due to missing data.

Shortcomings of this Study

1. Lacking standardized descriptions of abusive situations, we were dependent on DYS caseworkers' reports to present the information in a way that we could code and analyze. Many caseworkers did an excellent job of this. In other cases, adequate descriptions were not found and we occasionally had the sense that there was more to the family conflicts than what we were able to extract from the records. We abandoned the idea of examining, for example, the frequency of abuse or the age at abuse because the quality and depth of caseworkers' descriptions were not standardized. Many caseworkers would go into great detail about the frequency of abuse and weapons employed, while others would simple write "physical abuse."

2. Not all DYS case records are required to contain the type of in-depth information that would include data on family violence. Since it was necessary to analyze only the most complete records, we limited our sample to youths who were presented for secure placement. Because our sample was not representatively drawn from all DYS clients, our findings may not be generalizable to DYS' entire client population.

3. Our sub-study of 66 abused youths produced some fairly strong associations between variables that were not statistically significant. The failure to achieve statistical significance is most likely due to our small sample size, which is often a problem in this area of research.

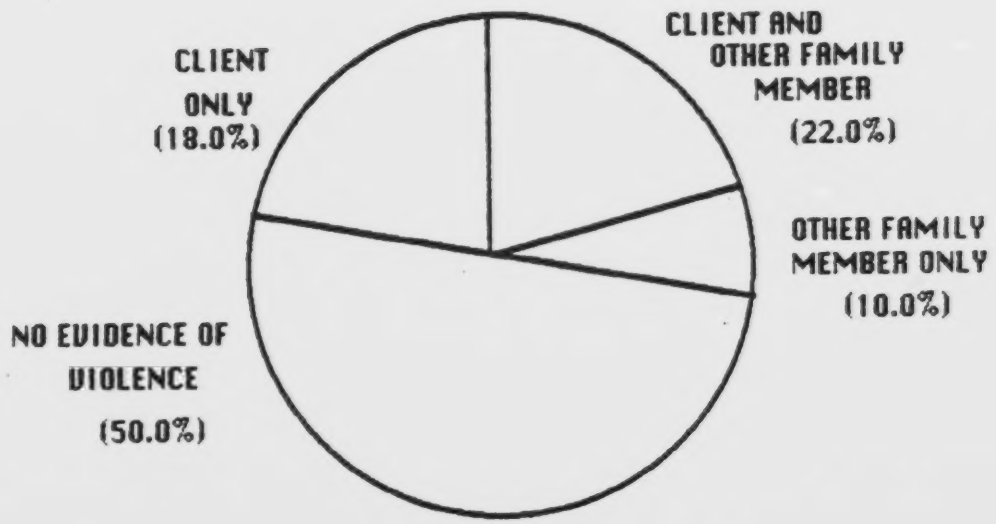
4. Most of our clients' reports of abuse are not officially substantiated. This is a reflection of the hidden nature of family violence, and as such is unavoidable. However, it does raise the possibility that some of the clients we are calling "abused" and "neglected" are perhaps not. On the other hand, due to the sensitive nature of these experiences, some of the youths in our sample may not have revealed their exposure to family violence to DYS caseworkers. It is therefore likely that we have overcounted certain cases and undercounted others.

SECTION SIX: FINDINGS ON THE EXTENT, DISTRIBUTION AND CONSEQUENCES OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

A. Extent of Family Violence

According to the best estimates of three independent researchers utilizing a range of family characteristics, between 22 and 25 percent of United States families are "at risk" of committing child abuse or neglect. What we found in our research on DYS clients is that 40 percent of the youths in our sample were directly abused and an additional 10 percent were witnesses to the abuse of another family member. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of exposure to family violence.

FIGURE 1. EXPOSURE TO FAMILY VIOLENCE



Forty percent of our clients were directly abused by a family member, and over half of these were also witnesses to

abuse. Thirty-two percent witnessed abuse, and of these over two-thirds were also direct victims.

What types of abuse were inflicted on our clients? The most common form of abuse was physical abuse, followed by neglect. Sexual and verbal abuse were less commonly noted. Approximately one in three youths was physically abused, one in five neglected, and one in sixteen sexually or verbally abused. Girls in our sample were nearly twice as likely as boys to be physically abused, three times more likely to be verbally abused, and were overwhelmingly the more likely victims of sexual abuse. The breakdown of type of abuse inflicted on boys and girls is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. TYPES OF ABUSE IN TOTAL SAMPLE AND AMONG BOYS AND GIRLS

	TYPE OF ABUSE INDICATED							
	INDICATION OF PHYSICAL ABUSE?		INDICATION OF NEGLECT?		INDICATION OF SEXUAL ABUSE?		INDICATION OF VERBAL ABUSE?	
TOTAL SAMPLE*	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
100% (n = 164)	28% (n=46)	72% (n=118)	20% (n=33)	80% (n=131)	6% (n=10)	94% (n=154)	6% (n=10)	94% (n=154)
BOYS ONLY:								
100% (n = 143)	26% (n=37)	74% (n=106)	20% (n=29)	80% (n=114)	1% (n=2)	99% (n=141	5% (n=7)	95% (n=136)
GIRLS ONLY								
100% (n = 21)	43% (n=9)	57% (n=12)	29% (n=4)	71% (n=17)	38% (n=8)	62% (n=13)	14% (n=3)	86% (n=18)

* Data missing for one case.

Where detailed accounts of violence in the family were available, they read like these: "Mother kept irregular hours. She had a bad temper and frequently beat Tommy [real names have not been used] with an extension cord and other items." "Father was an alcoholic who subject the family to abuse, both verbal and neglect. Dan was beaten by his mother and brother." "As a baby

Jose witnessed numerous outbursts from his father. Father was a heavy drinker with a violent temper who physically abused the family." "James witnessed two severe assaults on his mother by his natural father, and he tried to protect her. These beatings resulted in their divorce in 1975." "The home environment was abusive. Donna was physically abused by her brothers. She would sleep with a knife under her pillow." "Father had a drinking problem and physically abused both the children and their mother. When mother was pregnant with Andy, father beat her seriously and was later prosecuted for assault and battery. Later, the step-father physically abused the children, leading to a Care and Protection petition that placed both children with DSS for two years. In addition, their stepfather sexually abused Andy's sister and is refusing to pay child support." "Both parents abused their children and when Rick was 14, he got his own lawyer and brought charges against his parents. Father is an alcoholic and the abuse stems from that. Parents have severe marital problems. Rick's physical abuse began at age 3."

One particularly well-documented case illustrates the types of abuse inflicted on a youth by his stepfather:

Name: John W.
Age: 17
Race: White
School: Special needs student
Health: Several years ago, John was the victim of a stabbing and now walks with a limp.
Age First Arrest: 14
Current Charge: Armed Assault with Intent to Rob

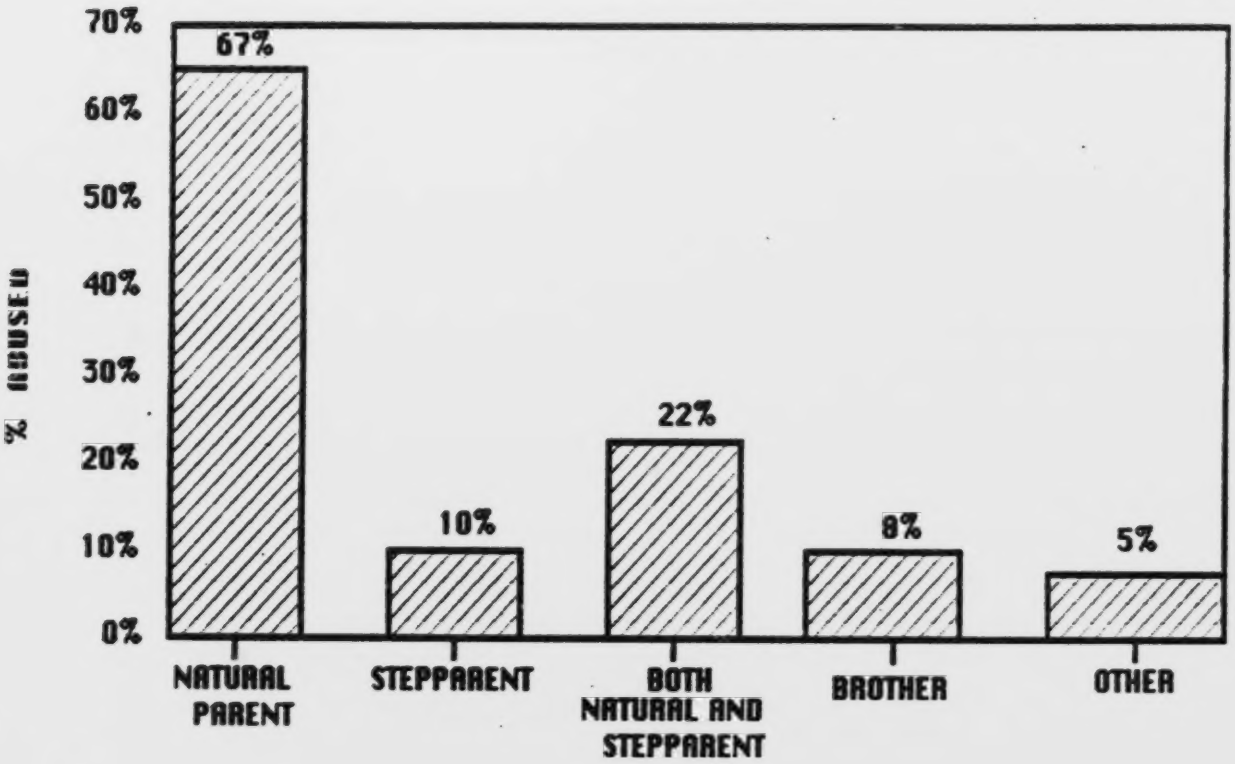
Family History: John's parents divorced when he was seven and his father moved out of the country. Shortly after the divorce, John's mother remarried. John's stepfather had a serious drinking problem and would become quite violent when drunk. John's parents would argue over many things but generally the arguments concerned John. John's stepfather often beat him, and

when his mother would try to intercede, he would beat her. On one occasion, John's stepfather hung him from a hook and beat him in the face. On another occasion, when John was 13, his stepfather held a knife to him for telling a younger half-sibling that the tooth fairy did not exist.

Now in a DYS placement, John continues to have contact with his stepfather. John acknowledges feeling angry with him and stated to a psychologist that he would like to hit him but has never done so.

Who in the family was responsible for inflicting abuse on DYS youths? Figure 2 shows the percentage of youths abused by natural parent(s) only, stepparent only, both natural parent and stepparent, brother(s), and other family members.

FIGURE 2. PERCENT OF CLIENTS ABUSED, BY FAMILIAL ROLE OF ABUSER



As Figure 2 shows, natural parents were overwhelmingly responsible for inflicting abuse on our clients.

What is the relationship between the familial role of the abuser and forms of abuse inflicted? Lacking details of the abusive situation for most clients, we compared victims of multiple forms of abuse (i.e., some combination of physical, sexual, verbal and neglect), with victims of exactly one type of abuse. According to this dichotomy, 59 percent of victimized youths were single-abuse victims and 41 percent were multiple-abuse victims. What, then, is the relationship between the infliction of multiple forms of abuse and familial role of the abuser?

Using three ranked categories of abusers' role, ranked low to high from natural to stepparent to both, we found a strong positive and statistically significant relationship[1] between multiple forms of abuse and familial role of the abuser. Findings of this relationship are presented in Table 2 below. As shown in Table 2, multiple forms of abuse were very likely when both a natural parent and a stepparent were involved, occurred in half of the cases involving stepparents only, and in one-fourth of the cases involving natural parents only.

TABLE 2. PERCENTAGE OF SINGLE-ABUSE AND MULTIPLE-ABUSE VICTIMS ACCORDING TO FAMILIAL ROLE OF ABUSER

	FORM OF ABUSE					
FAMILIAL ROLE OF ABUSER	SINGLE	(N)	MULTIPLE	(N)	TOTAL	(N)
NATURAL PARENTS	74%	(29)	26%	(10)	100%	(39)
STEPPARENTS	50%	(3)	50%	(3)	100%	(6)
BOTH NATURAL AND STEPPARENTS	15%	(2)	85%	(11)	100%	(13)

In addition, we compared multiple-abuse victims with single-abuse victims for youths with exactly one abuser -- either a parent or stepparent. Again we found a strong positive relationship which was statistically significant.[2] As shown in Table 3 below, one-half of the youths abused by one stepparent were multiply-abused, compared with 13 percent of youths abused by one natural parent.

[1] Gamma = .77, $p < .001$

[2] Gamma = .75, $p < .05$

TABLE 3. PERCENTAGE OF SINGLE-ABUSE AND MULTIPLE-ABUSE VICTIMS, NATURAL PARENT VS. STEPPARENT AS ABUSER

	FORM OF ABUSE					
ROLE OF ABUSER	SINGLE	(N)	MULTIPLE	(N)	TOTAL	(N)
NATURAL PARENT	87%	(26)	13%	(4)	100%	(30)
STEPPARENT	50%	(3)	50%	(3)	100%	(6)

B. Distribution of Family Violence

We were interested in determining if any factors of our clients and their families were associated with an increased likelihood of child abuse. That is, we wanted to know if certain characteristics appeared to put youths "at risk" of being victimized by a family member. We examined our sample of youths presented to the Classification Panel for evidence of child abuse or neglect as well as the following characteristics: client's sex, race, family income, and region of residence. Parents' marital status was not examined because of the lack of variation in our sample -- only 16 percent of our clients' parents were married and living together.

Of the factors we examined, statistically significant differences in abuse history were found only for sex of client.[1] Girls in our sample had twice the probability of being abused as boys, as shown in Table 4 below.

[1] Gamma = .47, $p < .05$

TABLE 4. HISTORY OF ABUSE BY SEX OF CLIENT

	SEX OF CLIENT			
ABUSED?	BOYS		GIRLS	
		(N)		(N)
YES	37%	(53)	62%	(13)
NO	63%	(90)	38%	(8)
TOTAL*	100%	(143)	100%	(21)

* Data missing for one case.

Race of client was not a factor in abuse (42 percent of nonwhites compared to 39 percent of whites were abuse victims), nor was family income. We found some variations by region -- roughly 45 percent of youths from the Western, Central and Metropolitan Boston regions were abused, compared with 30 percent from the Northeast and Southeast regions -- but the differences were not statistically significant.

The effect of race and family income on youths' direct victimization was compared with their indirect exposure -- that is, witnessing violence in the family. We divided our sample into four ranked categories -- no abuse, witness only, directly abused only, and both directly abused and witness to violence. Neither race nor family income increased the risk of direct or indirect exposure to family violence for the youths in our sample.

C. Consequences of Family Violence

According to the research literature, the effects of family violence are far-reaching and can result in a number of future behavioral problems for the youth. In light of such findings, we examined the possible relationships between abuse and several negative behavioral patterns that are common to our client population. Specifically, we looked for correlations between abuse and serious drug and alcohol problems, serious psychological diagnoses, attempted suicide, and a number of variables measuring delinquent behavior. Contrary to other studies, we found no

apparent relationship between direct abuse or being a witness to abuse and serious drug involvement, alcohol involvement, psychological problems, or attempted suicide. That is, drug and alcohol involvement, psychological disorders, and attempted suicide were just as often serious problems for non-abused youths as for abused youths. We observed at least one explanation for this in our examination of case records. We found a number of fundamental problems common to family situations of most of the youths in our sample -- poverty, broken homes, high-crime neighborhoods -- that would likely impact on adolescent behavior independently of parental abuse.

In spite of our failure to find correlations between experiencing abuse and the behavioral problems listed above, we did find interesting patterns in delinquent behavior when we compared abused youths with non-abused youths. Offenses were categorized as either offenses against the person or offenses not involving the person (i.e., property, motor vehicle, drug, other). Our initial examination focussed on the most recent point in the delinquent careers of our sample youths. When we examined only the most recent "target" offense, which resulted in the youths' presentation before the Classification Panel, we found that abused youths were more likely than non-abused youths to commit a crime against the person. The difference was statistically significant,[1] and results are summarized in Table 5.

[1] Gamma = .49, $p < .01$

TABLE 5. PERCENTAGE OF ABUSED AND NON-ABUSED YOUTHS COMMITTING THEIR TARGET OFFENSE AGAINST THE PERSON

TYPE OF OFFENSE	ABUSED	(N)	NOT ABUSED	(N)
AGAINST THE PERSON	74%	(37)	49%	(39)
OTHER OFFENSE	26%	(13)	51%	(40)
TOTAL[1]	100%	(50)	100%	(79)

However, closer inspection of the youths' total offense record revealed different patterns of abuse and delinquency. We expected to find a positive association between childhood abuse and number of prior arrests. But our results pointed in the opposite direction -- the youths who were not abused had more prior arrests than youths who were abused, and the relationship was statistically significant.[2] Findings are summarized in Table 6.

TABLE 6. PERCENTAGE OF ABUSED AND NON-ABUSED YOUTHS WITH LONG AND SHORT ARREST RECORDS

ARREST RECORD	ABUSED	(N)	NOT ABUSED	(N)
SHORT RECORD (One or Two Priors)	59%	(39)	34%	(34)
LONG RECORD (Three or More Priors)	41%	(27)	66%	(65)
TOTAL*	100%	(66)	100%	(98)

* Data missing for one case.

[1] Youths referred to the Classification Panel due to revocation of conditional liberty, rather than adjudication of an offense, were eliminated from this Table.

[2] Gamma = -.47, $p < .01$

Similarly, we expected to find a positive association between abuse and the total number of prior violent incidents for which sample youths were arrested. Contrary to our expectations, abused youths had somewhat fewer prior violent arrests than non-abused youths, although the difference was not statistically significant. Moreover, again contrary to our hypothesis, when we examined the relationship between the number of different forms of abuse inflicted (one type or more than one type) and delinquency, we found that multiply-abused youths tended to have had fewer prior arrests.[1]

One possible explanation for the shorter and less serious prior records of abused youths, along with the apparent contradiction of their more serious target offenses, is that the delinquent careers of abused youths may culminate more quickly in a serious offense against the person. In order to test this explanation, we examined "duration of delinquent career" from the date of the youth's first court appearance to the date of his or her most recent commitment. When we compared abused with non-abused youths, however, we found virtually no differences between the average delinquent career lengths of the two groups.

What this finding suggests is that non-abused youths were arrested for more prior offenses in the same period of time as abused youths, so that if "arrest" is a fair measure of delinquent activity, non-abused youths not only committed more offenses, but did so more frequently than abused youths. Taken as a whole, these findings point to factors other than abuse as explanations of delinquent career patterns. These questions will be examined in greater detail using another comparison group in our second report.

Other offense-related variables (age at first offense, and age at first commitment to DYS) showed no relationship to the client's experience of abuse or neglect.

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[1] Gamma = -.47, $p < .01$

An interesting finding concerning "lone" delinquent behavior emerged when we compared four levels of youth's exposure to family violence (no known exposure, witness only, direct abuse only, both witness and direct abuse) with whether or not he or she acted alone during the target offense. Theories of delinquency often suggest that peer group influences contribute to the individual youth violating the law. It is commonly assumed that in cases where no delinquent peer group exerts such pressure, there are other precipitating factors in the youth's life that contribute to his or her delinquent behavior. One such factor may be exposure to family violence. In order to test this theory, we hypothesized that abused youths who also witnessed abuse would be the most likely to act alone in committing an offense, following by abused youths who were not also witnesses, witnesses only, and clients with no known history of family violence.

Our findings support this hypothesis to a certain extent. As is shown in Table 7 below, the type of exposure to family violence appears to be related to the type of involvement in delinquency in the direction hypothesized, although the number of cases in these categories was too small to permit further comparison. Table 7 also shows, however, that more of the youths <u>without</u> a history of violence acted alone than did either witnesses of abuse or abused youths who were not also witnesses to family violence.

TABLE 7. TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT IN TARGET OFFENSE BY TYPE OF EXPOSURE TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

TYPE OF EXPOSURE	INVOLVEMENT IN TARGET OFFENSE					
	ALONE	(N)	ACCOMPLICE	(N)	TOTAL	(N)
NO ABUSE	44%	(24)	56%	(30)	100%	(54)
WITNESS ONLY	13%	(1)	87%	(7)	100%	(8)
ABUSED ONLY	24%	(4)	76%	(13)	100%	(17)
BOTH WITNESS AND ABUSED	71%	(17)	29%	(7)	100%	(24)

We examined several other factors of abusive situations in relation to the possible consequences of abuse. Our findings suggest that there may be a relationship between sibling abuse and clients' attempted suicide: attempted suicide was nearly six times more likely when an abused client was the only child in the family suffering abuse than when a sibling was also victimized. The findings are summarized in Table 8 below. This relationship was not statistically significant, probably due to the small size of our abused sub-sample as well as the small number of youths who attempted suicide. Nonetheless, the strength of the association suggests that clients abused in isolation, without sharing their experience with a sibling, are particularly vulnerable to self-destructive behavior.

TABLE 8. PROPORTION OF SUICIDAL CLIENTS WITH AND WITHOUT A VICTIMIZED SIBLING

DID CLIENT ATTEMPT SUICIDE?	WAS A SIBLING ALSO ABUSED?			
	YES		NO	
		(N)		(N)
YES	3%	(1)	18%	(6)
NO	97%	(30)	82%	(27)
TOTAL	100%	(31)	100%	(33)

We examined the relationship between sibling abuse and several other possible consequences of abuse. We did not find any association between sibling abuse and clients' alcohol or drug use, psychological problems, age at first offense, age at commitment, or seriousness of offense record.

Summary of Section Six

The extent of family violence experienced by our sample of DYS clients is alarming. Fully one-half of the youths studied were exposed to violence or neglect in the home: forty percent were directly abused and ten percent more were indirect witnesses to the abuse of a sibling or mother. Girls in our sample had nearly twice the probability as boys of experiencing abuse. For both boys and girls, the most commonly reported form of abuse was physical abuse, followed by neglect for boys and sexual abuse for girls.

A finding which may have direct relevance for policy-making is that our abused clients attempted suicide at nearly six times the rate when they were the only youthful victim in the family as when a sibling was also victimized. The increased likelihood of self-destructive behavior among isolated victims of abuse should be taken into account in making treatment and placement decisions.

Who in the family is inflicting violence upon our clients? Our data provide no evidence that certain economic or ethnic groups are most likely involved in abusive situations in the home. However, we do have evidence that argues for family intervention for both natural parents and stepparents. While we found that natural parents were overwhelmingly the most likely abusers, we also found that when stepparents were involved, the likelihood of multiple forms of abuse rose sharply.

What are the consequences of child abuse? Surprisingly, we found no apparent relationships between direct abuse or being a witness to abuse and serious drug involvement, alcohol involvement, psychological problems, or attempted suicide. Our examination of the relationship between abuse and delinquent behavior produced mixed results. Our analysis of target offenses showed that abused youths were more likely to commit offenses against

the person than were youths with no abuse history. However, abused youths had shorter and less serious offense records than non-abused youths, and youths who experienced multiple forms of abuse had shorter and less serious offense records than youths who experienced one type of abuse. Perhaps significantly, we found that youths who were both directly abused and witnesses to abuse were by far the most likely to commit their target offense alone, without an accomplice.

SECTION SEVEN: FINDINGS ON OFFICIAL REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

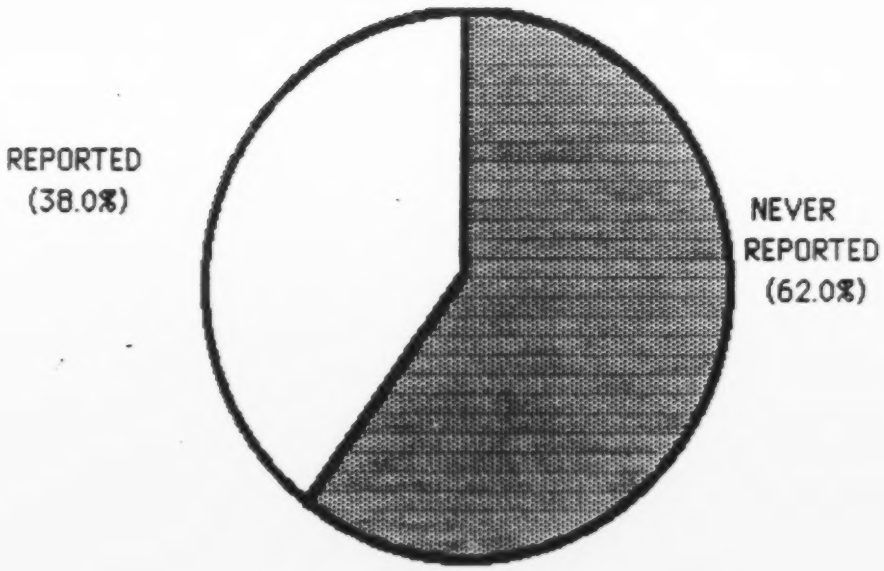
Child abuse and neglect are often offenses that are, by nature, hidden. Such offenses occur within the private domain of one's home and are not easily visible to outsiders. As a result, the sense among the general public and virtually all researchers is that a considerable amount of violence is inflicted on children and adolescents in the home that is never reported to official agencies.

As one agency whose policies are effected by the problem of family violence, DYS was interested in examining factors that may be associated with the reporting of child abuse. Specifically, how many of DYS' abused clients were ever referred to the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS) for family intervention? How many received therapy prior to their commitment to DYS? What characteristics of families and children make reporting more likely?

Massachusetts' official reporting policy was set by the state legislature in 1973 with the passage of Section 51A of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 119, which requires that certain professionals report suspected child abuse or neglect to DSS and encourages others to do so. The youths in our research sample were about five years old when this law went into effect. Studies have shown that approximately seventy percent of childhood abuse occurs after the age of five, so we are assuming that most incidents of abuse or neglect occurred with our sample after the official reporting system was implemented.

Figure 3 shows the proportion of clients for whom DYS has evidence of abuse or neglect who were reported to DSS on abuse/neglect (51A) status. Of the 66 youths in our sub-sample who were abused or neglect, the majority, 62 percent, were never referred to DSS for familial abuse or neglect.

FIGURE 3. PROPORTION OF ABUSED YOUTH REPORTED TO DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES FOR ABUSE/NEGLECT



Are abused and referred youths more likely to have received services for emotional problems than abused youths who were never referred to DSS? We found that the majority of both referred and non-referred youths received no individual, group or family therapy, nor were they placed in mental institutions prior to their commitment to DYS. However, we did find that the referred youths in our sample fared somewhat better than those not referred, as shown in Table 9 below.

TABLE 9. PROPORTION OF YOUTHS RECEIVING THERAPY PRIOR TO DYS COMMITMENT, BY REFERRAL TO DSS FOR ABUSE/NEGLECT

REFERRED TO DSS FOR ABUSE/NEGLECT?	RECEIVED PRIOR THERAPY?					
	YES		NO		TOTAL*	
		(N)		(N)		(N)
YES	33%	(8)	67%	(16)	100%	(24)
NO	20%	(8)	80%	(33)	100%	(41)

* Data missing for one case.

Are certain types of abuse more under-reported than others? We examined official DSS reporting rates for three types of abuse -- physical, sexual, and neglect. Our findings are contrary to what we expected regarding sexual abuse. That is, due to the complex and hidden nature of sexual abuse, we expected that sexual abuse would be the most under-reported of the three types. However, we found little differences in the reporting rates for these types of abuse. Our findings are summarized in Table 10.

TABLE 10. OFFICIAL REPORTING RATES BY TYPE OF ABUSE

TYPE OF ABUSE	PERCENTAGE REPORTED TO DSS
SEXUAL	40% (4 out of 10 youths)
PHYSICAL	37% (17 out of 46 youths)
NEGLECT	39% (13 out of 33 youths)

According to Table 10, sexual abuse was no more under-reported than either physical abuse or neglect. This could, however, be a result of clients and families being more likely to admit to DYS caseworkers that other types of violence occurred in their families, and continuing to conceal information about sexual abuse in particular.

We initially speculated that certain demographic characteristics may distinguish those families who were reported to DSS from those who were not. Because social service and correctional agencies tend to intervene disproportionately with non-white and low-income families and individuals, we suspected that non-whites would more likely be reported for child abuse, and that the median family income would be lower for reported families. Also, since girls are the most likely victims of sexual abuse, which we hypothesized is the least reported type of abuse, we suspected that overall, abuse of girls would be less reported than abuse of boys.

When we compared demographic characteristics of DSS-referred youths -- sex and race of client, family income, and region of residence -- to youths who were not referred, there were only slight differences in the two groups and the results were not statistically significant, probably due to the small size of our sub-sample.

In spite of the failure to achieve statistical significance, our findings are of interest because they are contrary to our original hypotheses. We found that referred youths were slightly more likely to be female, and they were slightly more likely to be white. The median family income was slightly higher ($8400 versus $7400) for referred youths. In addition, when we compared low-income whites, low-income non-whites, high-income whites, and high-income non-whites, we found that all categories except the low-income non-whites had reporting rates ranging from 35 percent to 47 percent. In contrast, the reporting rate for low-income non-whites was 17 percent. Finally, we also found that Boston area youths were referred to DSS at a somewhat higher rate than were youths from other regions of the state.

Do reporting rates vary according to the familial role of the abuser? We were not certain who -- natural parents or step-parents -- would be more likely caught and officially labelled as abusers. We talked with probation agency personnel and learned

that their encounters with child abusers are mainly with natural parents. Their belief was that stepparents are more adept at getting around the law and avoiding official recognition. As a result, we hypothesized that natural parents would more likely be reported than stepparents.

We compared overall reporting rates and reporting rates for individual categories of abuse by familial role of the abuser -- either natural parent(s) or stepparent. Overall, the differences in reporting rates were not statistically significant, but we found that cases of child abuse/neglect involving both an abusive natural parent and an abusive stepparent were the most likely to be reported. That is, one-third of youths abused by only a natural parent and one-third of youths abused by only a stepparent were reported, but 46 percent of youths abused by both a natural parent as well as a stepparent were reported. No differences in reporting rates were found when we compared male abusers to female abusers.

Are the most serious abusive situations (i.e., those involving multiple abusers, multiple victims, or multiple types of abuse) the most likely to come to the attention of DSS? We examined five variables measuring extensiveness of victimization and their relationship to official reporting. First, we compared the reporting chances of multiple-abuse victims with youths who experienced exactly one form of abuse. We found a strong positive and statistically significant relationship, with multiple-abuse victims more likely to be officially reported. Our findings are summarized in Table 11 below. Table 11 shows that being highly abused nearly doubled a youth's chance of DSS intervention.

TABLE 11. OFFICIAL REPORTING RATES BY SINGLE OR MULTIPLE FORMS OF ABUSE

FORM OF ABUSE	PERCENTAGE REPORTED TO DSS
SINGLE	27% (10 out of 37 youths)
MULTIPLE	46% (12 out of 26 youths)

Our four other measures of highly abusive situations - presence of an abused sibling, battered mother, both abused sibling and battered mother, and more than one abuser - did not increase the likelihood of an abused youth being reported to DSS.

We also examined whether abused youths who attempted suicide were more likely to be flagged and reported to DSS than youths who did not attempt suicide.

Due to the wording of the accounts of attempted suicide, we assumed that it occurred prior to DSS referral, although we could not be certain of this. We speculated that the suicide attempt would signal a problem in the family and make DSS' attention more likely. Our findings tended to support this hypothesis but were not statistically significant. We found that abused youths who attempted suicide were three times more likely than other abused youths to be referred to DSS. Specifically, we found that 15 percent of youths who attempted suicide were referred, while only five percent of those who did not attempt suicide were referred.

Summary of Section Seven

The majority of abused or neglected youths in our sample, as we suspected, were not reported to the Department of Social Services (DSS) for parental abuse or neglect. We found that nearly twice as many youths were directly victimized by a family member as were officially reported to DSS. Those children who were officially reported were somewhat more likely to have received therapeutic services prior to DYS commitment than were children who were not reported to DSS.

Contrary to our initial assumption, we found virtually no differences in the reporting rates for sexual abuse as compared with physical abuse and neglect. It may be that unreported sexual abuse is no more widespread than other forms of abuse. Perhaps a more likely possibility is that DYS caseworkers are not privy to as much "hidden" (i.e., unreported) information from clients concerning sexual abuse as they are concerning physical abuse and neglect.

We did find a positive and statistically significant relationship between multiple forms of victimization and the likelihood of being reported to DSS. Nearly twice as many multiply-abused youths were reported as were youths who suffered only one type of abuse. Somewhat surprisingly, if a youth was not alone in being victimized -- that is, if a sibling or mother was also the target of domestic violence -- the youth was no more likely to be officially reported. Similarly, the number of individuals inflicting abuse on a youth bore no relationship to the likelihood of his or her being reported. Due to the lack of research on the process of reporting child abuse to the authorities, we have little information on the events that precipitate such intervention. As a result, these findings raise more questions than they answer. If we knew who was likely to file the reports -- family members, neighbors, or persons in professional contact with the child (e.g. doctors or teachers) we

could better theorize as to why the number of forms of abuse, but not the number of abusers or victims, is a determinant in the referral process.

Demographic characteristics failed, at a statistically significant level, to distinguish families who were officially reported from those who were not, although low-income non-white families in our sample were reported at half the rate of other families. Part of the explanation for our lack of statistically significant associations may be our small sample size as well as the relative economic homogeneity of our sample.

We found no differences in referral rates when we compared sex of the abuser, nor did we find substantial differences when we compared referral rates by familial role of the abuser(s) -- natural parent(s), stepparent(s), or both types of parents. Thus it appears that abusive stepparents are not more successful in eluding the authorities than are natural parents.

We found that youths' attempted suicide increased their chances of referral, although more information on the temporal relationship between suicide attempts and DSS referral would be needed to fully interpret this result.

SECTION EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC POLICY

- Our findings suggest that youths committed to the Department of Youth Services have experienced nearly double the rate of abuse and neglect expected among United States families. Half of our client sample was exposed to some type of violence in the home. Moreover, the consequences of child abuse and neglect are known to be potentially severe. If not addressed, the after-effects of domestic violence can be harmful, not only to the child but through his later behavior, to the community at large.

- The majority of clients who reported past abuse to DYS caseworkers were never officially reported to the Department of Social Services, nor did they receive any individual or family counseling services prior to their commitment to DYS. For most children, therefore, DYS involvement marks the first official intervention into the family situation. It is important that DYS' philosophy of community-based treatment take into account the prevalence and influence of violent family environments. Underlying DYS services is the assumption that the youth will return home, and much of DYS' client therapy focuses on preparing the youth for that return. However, it may also be important to consider a structured program to prepare and counsel clients' families for their return, particularly when a parent has been abusive.

- Abused clients who were the only youthful victims in their families were by far the most likely group to attempt suicide. Due in part to the small number of youths who attempted suicide, this finding was not statistically significant. Nonetheless, within our

sample, isolated victims of abuse were nearly six times more likely to attempt suicide than were youths with fellow abused siblings. It appears that siblings who are also victims of abuse offer needed support which mitigates the effects of victimization.

As a matter of internal DYS policy, program staff and caseworkers should be watchful of youths who meet this profile and exhibit evidence of suicidal tendencies. Outside of DYS, agencies such as DSS that are responsible for providing care and custody to children of violent families should consider the importance of sibling support structures in making placement decisions. For example, it may be advisable to place abused siblings together in order to minimize the hurtful consequences of family violence. Similarly, it may also be advisable to provide isolated victims with additional supports to address issues of negative self-concept and self-destructive behavior.

- We recommend that DYS develop standardized methods for identifying abused and neglected youths which would include details of the abuse inflicted, by whom, how long ago, how frequently, etc. Questionnaires of this type have been developed for research studies (Geller and Ford-Somma, 1984; Rhoades and Parker, 1981 -- see Appendix 2 for physical and sexual abuse questionnaires) and could be used as a basis for DYS' abuse identification instruments. We advise that as caseworkers and program staff form closer relationships with a client, the abuse identification instrument be re-administered in order to gather information that the client may have previously concealed.

- Due to the complex and volatile nature of violent home situations, the National Council on Child Abuse and Neglect has recommended a coordinated and integrated

response involving all agencies that work with children. A multi-disciplinary model would identify at-risk or abusing families and would work to change destructive family patterns. Ideally, all state agencies involved in the care and treatment of children and adolescents in Massachusetts would assist in developing this family intervention model and would jointly participate in its implementation in the community.

- Our findings have certain implications for targeting agency intervention. According to our data, female clients have a higher probability of experiencing abuse and so their needs, particularly in addressing issues of sexual abuse, should be given priority in providing services to families and youths. Our data also suggest that family intervention should involve both natural parents and stepparents. We found that natural parents are more likely to abuse their children, but stepparents are more likely to inflict multiple forms of abuse. Our findings produced no evidence to suggest targeting family intervention based on family income or ethnicity.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

To date, standardized vocabulary has not been developed to guide DYS caseworkers in reporting the characteristics of violent home situations to which clients have been exposed. As a result, we adopted rather loose definitions for each of our categories of abuse, which are outlined as follows.

Definitions of Abuse Categories

1. Physical Abuse: "Physical abuse," "infliction of bodily harm," "severely beaten up," "repeated abuse," "torture," "frequent beatings," "severe assaults," descriptions of physical assault, or threatening injury while holding a weapon such as a knife.

2. Sexual Abuse: "Sexual abuse," "sexual molestation," "rape," "sexual assault."

3. Verbal Abuse: "Verbal abuse," "numerous occasions of threatening bodily harm."

4. Wife Battering: All of the above in Physical Abuse and Sexual Abuse categories; also, if parents divorced on the grounds of "cruel and abusive treatment" of the mother.

Definition of Neglect

1. Suspected Neglect: When in the case records any of the following phrases were used: "signs of neglect," "possible neglect," etc.

2. Neglect: If the record clearly stated that the child was neglected, or if the child was accepted by DSS under a Care and Protection petition for reasons of neglect, or if statements were found such as "mother (or parents) want nothing to do with the client.

In general, abandonment by father only did not constitute neglect by our definition. Otherwise, nearly all of our clients would be defined as neglected. However, if the father was the sole guardian and he abandoned the family or otherwise failed to provide for them, we defined it as neglect. In addition, if an estranged father had been ordered by a judge to make child support payments and consistently failed to do so, we called it neglect.

APPENDIX B: FAMILY VIOLENCE INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT *

* Source: Philip W. Rhoades and Sharon L. Parker, op. cit., pages 78-80.

Place a check (✓) mark in all of the boxes that describe what happened at home, how often this happened, and how old you were when this started happening.

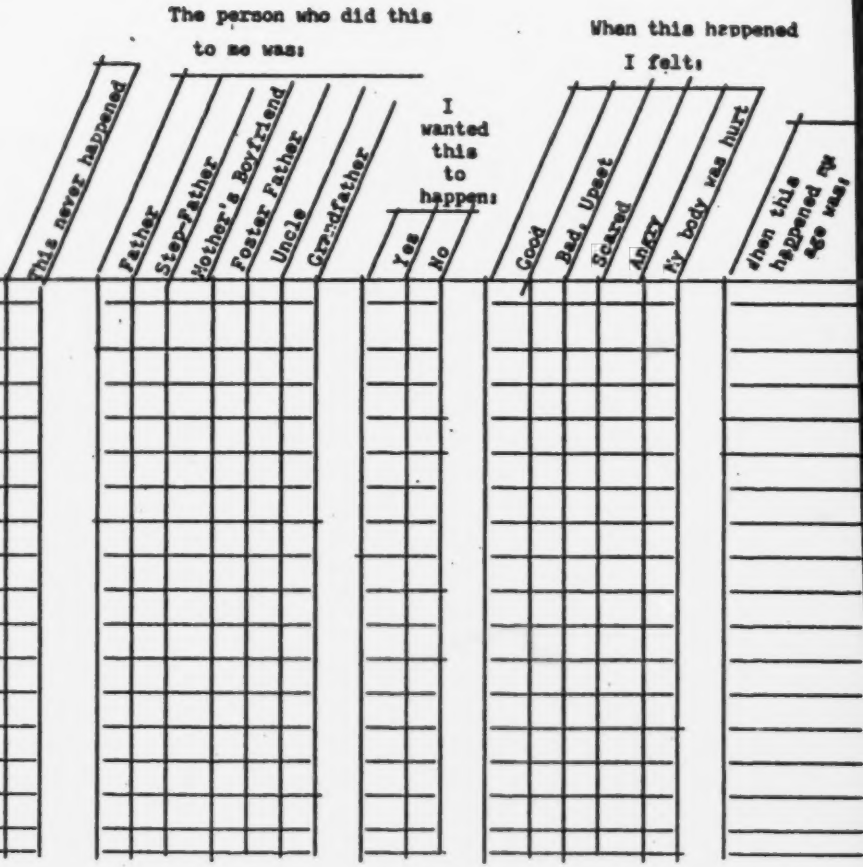
When my male parent was angry with me he showed it by:	How many times this happened: Never	Less than once a year	1 to 6 times year	6 to 12 times a year	More than 12 times a year	This started happening: Before I was 6 years old	After 6 years before 12	After I was 12 years old
1. He talked calmly about what he didn't like								
2. Took away a priviledge (No TV; no friends over)								
3. Yelled								
4. Called me names								
5. Pushed or shoved me around								
6. Slapped or hit me with open hand(s)								
7. Kicked me								
8. Punched or beat me with closed fist(s)								
9. Scared me with an object or weapon What did he use to scare?								
10. Hit me with an object or weapon What did he use to hit?								
11. He did something else What did he do? (write in what he did)								

When you were angry with your male parent what did you do?

1. What did you do sometimes?

2. What did you do often or alot of times?

Place a check (✓) mark in all of the boxes that describe what happened to you; check (✓) all of the people who did this to you; check (✓) "yes" if you wanted to do this, check (✓)"no" if you didn't want to do this; check (✓) how you felt when this happened to you; write in how old you were when this happened to you.



When he:

1.	Talked to me about sex
2.	Talked about the way I looked
3.	Gave me hugs
4.	Gave me kisses
5.	Touched my body
6.	Looked at me when I was dressing or undressing
7.	Looked at me when I was bathing or showering
8.	Looked at my sex organs
9.	Had me look at his sex organs
10.	Touched my sex organs
11.	Had me touch his penis
12.	Had me watch him jack off
13.	Put his penis inside my mouth
14.	Put his mouth on my sex organs
15.	Put his penis inside my body
16.	Had me do sexual things with other people
17.	He did something else What did he do? (Use the next page to write on)

1. Did you tell anyone about the things you checked off? ___Yes ___No

2. If you told someone, who did you tell?

3. Did you tell this person(s) at the time it happened? ___Yes ___No

4. What did you tell this person(s)?

5. What happened when you told?

APPENDIX C: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

CASE # ____

NAME _____

Mid #

Code 9= Not Applicable

8= Not Available

I. Abuse History

Type(s) of Abuse 1= No 2= Yes 3= Suspected		Abuse Committed By (see codes for abuser)
(Against Youth)	Physical ____	___ ___ ___ ___
"	Sexual ____	___ ___ ___ ___
"	Neglect ____	___ ___ ___ ___
"	Verbal ____	___ ___ ___ ___
(Against Mother)	Physical ____	___ ___ ___ ___
"	Sexual ____	___ ___ ___ ___
"	Verbal ____	___ ___ ___ ___
(Against Sibling)	Physical ____	___ ___ ___ ___
"	Sexual ____	___ ___ ___ ___
"	Neglect ____	___ ___ ___ ___
"	Verbal ____	___ ___ ___ ___

Codes for Abuser:

0= Client
1= Mother
2= Father
3= Stepmother
4= Stepfather
5= Brother/Stepbrother
6= Sister/ Stepsister
7= Other _____ (specify)

Description of Abuse:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Has the client ever been referred to DSS due to violence or neglect in the home?

1=No 2= Yes _____

II. Instant Offense Information

Date of Commitment __ __ __ __ __ __ (MMDDYY)

Offenses Adjudicated: (List in order of seriousness)

_____ __ __ __ __ __

_____ __ __ __ __ __

_____ __ __ __ __ __

_____ __ __ __ __ __

Participants

Number of other persons participating in offense

7= 7 or more __

Sex of Participants

1= Males only
2= Females only
3= Males and Females __

Age of Participants

1= Under 18
2= 18 and over
3= Both under and over 18 __

Victims

Number of victims
7=7 or more __

Age group of victim(s)
7 = 7 or more

No. of victims in age group

1) Infant (0-5) ___
2) Child (6-12) ___
3) Teenager(13-17) ___
4) Young Adult (18-35) ___
5) Middle Age (36-59) ___
6) Senior Citizen (60 & over) ___

Sex of Victim(s)

7=7 or more

No of victims of that sex

1) Male ___
2) Female ___

Detailed Description of Target Offense

_____

_____

_____ ___ ___

_____ ___ ___

_____

_____

Relationship of Youth to Victim

Is the victim a family member?

1= No 2= Yes 8= Missing _____

If yes, Relationship:____

1= Mother 2= Father 3= Stepmother 4= Stepfather

5= Brother/Stepbrother 6= Sister/Stepsister 7= Other_____

III. Mental Health History

A. Psychological Evaluation

Date Seen: (MMDDYY) ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

Primary Diagnosis:

_____ ___ ___

_____ ___ ___

_____

_____

Diagnosis by:

1= Psychiatrist

2= Psychologist ___

3= Psychiatric Social Worker

4= Other_____

B. Suicidal Tendencies
Has the client attempted suicide?

1=No 2=Yes ____

C. Mental Health Services Prior to Commitment

Has client received any type of therapy outside of DYS? ___ ___

9= No
2= Individual therapy
3= Family therapy
4= Placement in mental health institution
5= Other therapy_____

Nature of problem_____

_____

_____

IV Parent's Marital Status

Natural Parent Status

01 Unmarried and living together
02 Divorced
03 Separated
04 Never Married
05 Married and living together
06 Mother deceased
07 Father deceased
08 Both parents deceased
09 Other_____

___ ___

Who were the client's primary guardians at the time of presentation to the Classification panel? (place a check mark beside each)

a. __Father
b. __Stepfather
c. __Foster father
d. __Other male guardian
e. __ Mother
f. __ Stepmother
g. __ Foster mother
h. __ Other female guardian

V Drugs and Alcohol ___ ___

Does the client have a problem with drugs? ___

1=No 2=Yes

Nature problem_____

_____

Does the client have a problem with alcohol?___

1= No 2=Yes

Nature of problem_____

_____

_____

VI. Prior Offense History

Does the client have a record of offenses prior to or following the instant offense?

1=No 2=Yes _____

If yes, complete the attached form.

PRIOR OFFENSE HISTORY

(All prior offenses except for instant offense(s).)

Case Number _____

Name _____

MID # _____

Code: 8 = Missing/Not Available
9 = Not Applicable

Codes for Outcome: 1 = Adjudicated
2 = Filed or Continued Without Finding
3 = Dismissed
4 = Defaulted
5 = Outstanding

Note: Two or more offenses arraigned on the same day- comprise one Incident.

List in order of most recent Incident:

INCIDENT # 1

Offense(s)	Offense Code(s)	Arraignment Date	Outcome	Adjudication Date
_____	_____	_____	___	_____
_____	_____	_____	___	_____

Were there more than two offensee charged in this incident? 1=No 2=Yes ____

If yes, list _____

INCIDENT #2

_____	_____	_____	___	_____
_____	_____	_____	___	_____

More than 2 offenses? 1=No 2=Yes ____

If yes, list _____

INCIDENT #3

_____	_____	_____	___	_____
_____	_____	_____	___	_____

More than 2 offenses? 1=No 2=Yes ____

If yes, list _____

INCIDENT #4

Offense(s)	Offense Code(s)	Arraignment Date	Outcome	Adjudication Date
_____	_ _ _ _ _	_ _ _ _ _ _	_	_ _ _ _ _ _
_____	_ _ _ _ _	_ _ _ _ _ _	_	_ _ _ _ _ _

More than 2 offenses? 1=No 2=Yes ____

If yes, list _____

INCIDENT #5

_____	_ _ _ _ _	_ _ _ _ _ _	_	_ _ _ _ _ _
_____	_ _ _ _ _	_ _ _ _ _ _	_	_ _ _ _ _ _

More than 2 offenses? 1=No 2=Yes _____

If yes, list _____

Were there more than 5 Incidents?

Code one of the following:

00=No
99=Not Applicable
Number of incidents _ _

If more than 5 Incidents, what is date of first court involvement?

_ _ _ _ _ _